

1. S.B. No. 40 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING OPEN ACCESS TO COLLEGE LEVEL COURSES.

My name is Sharon Gusky and I am a biology professor at Northwestern Connecticut Community College. I also advise student in Phi Theta Kappa, the International Honor Society of Two-year college students. Remedial education provides students with the skills they need to succeed. The students who place into remedial English classes at Northwestern, scored a 450 or lower on the reading and writing portion of the SATs. To put this in perspective, freshman students entering UCONN score between 550-650 and those entering Central score between 460 and 550. This means that community colleges provide the only opportunity for these students to obtain a college degree and remedial education provides the pathway to success for those students. In the fall of 2011, 136 students enrolled in remedial English courses at Northwestern. Only 41 of these students placed into the top level of remedial education. These are the only students that would be eligible for a program like the Baltimore Learning project that I believe this bill is loosely designed after. What will happen to the other 95 students? Currently a number of students place into our lowest level remedial English class. Students in the level are read at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade or lower level. These students and our professors are being asked to remediate 4 years of skills in just 2 semesters. That is a daunting task for both the students and instructors. Three years ago the success rate of these students was 28%. Which I found amazing, imagine jumping four grade levels, from 8<sup>th</sup> grade to college ready in just 2 semesters! The experience for these students is life changing! But our English faculty knew they could do better and they revised the curriculum so that students now take integrated reading and writing courses and now 42% of these students have the skills necessary to be successful in college level classes, in just 2 semesters. For them this is a life changing experience, they can succeed in college, become honors students, obtain a college degree and become skilled members of Connecticut's workforce. Some of these students even go on to get their bachelors degree at UCONN and Central, places that had previously rejected their application or even Trinity and Wesleyan- places they never dreamed they could go. These students would not be successful without remedial education. Allowing students to enter college level classes unprepared sets them up to fail; Remedial education, the stepping stone to success, changes lives. I urge the committee to find another way to deal with their concerns about remedial education.